TASTE and BEAUTY.

AN

EPISTLE

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

Earl of *CHESTERFIELD.*

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Earl of *CHESTERFIELD.*

PARDON th' officious Muſe, my Lord, whoſe Strain
Firſt welcomes you to *Britain*'s Shore again!
In *Britain*'s Name ſhe ſtrikes the vocal Strings,
And a *whole Nation* dictates what ſhe ſings;
No venom'd Flattery need corrupt her Lays,
The higheſt Glory is our Country's Praiſe.

MANY deſerve, but few acquire Renown;
For Envy keeps the riſing Trophy down:
But Honour ſhines with all her Rays on you,
And Envy *pleas'd* confeſſes *all* your Due.

AWHILE

AWHILE we ſpar'd you to a foreign Coaſt,
And, when we moſt admir'd, lamented moſt;
We ſpar'd you to *adorn* the *Britiſh* Name,
And, with *your own*, increaſe your Country's Fame;
Contending Pow'rs in laſting League to bind,
And toil, for Years, to reconcile Mankind.
But, when your wiſh'd Return was long delay'd,
And thwarting Int'reſts new Confuſion made,
Our former Pride became our preſent Pain,
And *Britain* for her Fav'rite pin'd again.
At laſt you link'd the many-jointed Band,
And the *Work* owns the mighty *Workman*'s Hand;
Fair *Union* ſmiles, the *Olive* blooms anew,
And the *firſt Wreath* the *Muſe* preſents to you.

---O deign, great Judge of *Taſte!* once more to ſmile
On dying *Verſe*, and bleſs the *Muſe*'s Toil;
No leſs a Genius can ſupport her Cauſe,
No leſs Example guide her to Applauſe:
Her Pride is but to learn where you excel,
And *tamely* copy what you paint ſo well.
---So ſhould ſome *Student* his raw Genius try,
In *Guido*'s Style, and under *Guido*'s Eye,
The trembling Sketch would baffle the Deſign,
And the weak Colours prove as faint as mine;
My Fear, and my Succeſs with his agree;
What *Guido* is to him, are You to me.

TASTE is a Mark ſo ſmall, no common Sight
Can guide th' uncertain Arrow to the White;
Like Wit, and Humour, 'tis a Cob-web Theme,
An unknown Subſtance, but familiar Name:
All talk as if the Standard were their own,
And each enjoy'd the ſacred Teſt alone;
But none eſſay the Bullion in the Mine,
Or ſhew the Royal Impreſs on their Coin;
As well an *Infant's Hand* might ſtrive to raiſe
The Rocky-Land-Marks of *Herculean* Days;
Such as, in *Homer*, Giant *Ajax* throws;
Such as would ſprain a Dozen modern Beaux.

TASTE to the Mind is like the Mode in Dreſs,
What all admire, and covet to poſſeſs;
But, oft deceiv'd in both, the publick Voice
Mocks its own Fondneſs by an Idiot Choice;
In vain Opinion ſooths our little Pride,
In vain light Fancy roams a random Guide;
Opinion alters, Fancy knows no Bound,
Error begins, and Folly ends the Round:
The Want of Beauty Want of Taſte betrays,
And *Elegance* alone can merit Praiſe.
True Taſte's the Reliſh which the Mind receives
From Harmony, the Joy which Beauty gives!
'Tis born of Genius, but 'tis nurs'd by Art,
The Head's the Fountain, tho' it reach the Heart;
If Genius forms the Image in the Mind,
'Tis Taſte corrects what Genius has deſign'd:

Nature's the Body, Genius is the Soul,
But Taſte unites them both, and reconciles the whole:
As from the Stars, that gem the Brow of Night,
Deſcends one common Stream of blended Light,
So Taſte muſt flow from Wiſdom's Rays divine,
And in one gen'ral Conſtellation ſhine.

WISDOM, like Day-Light, journey'd from the Eaſt,
And *Egypt* firſt beneath her Dawn was bleſt;
Here the firſt Sculptors form'd the mimick Stone,
And *Building* roſe by Precepts of their own;
Hence *Thebes*, with all her hundred Gates, became
The Seat of Beauty, and the Boaſt of Fame:
Hence the huge *Pyramids* ſuperbly riſe
To load the Earth, and almoſt prop the Skies:
Fram'd to endure rude Time's deſtructive Rage,
The World's juſt Wonder down thro' ev'ry Age!
At the ſtrong Baſe the envious *Demon* ſtands,
And ſhakes the Weight with unavailing Hands;
Secure the fearleſs Monuments remain,
Alone exempted from his Tyrant-Reign.

GREECE form'd her Taſte in *Egypt*'s elder Schools,
But into Science wrought their vagrant Rules;
Hence Art was taught, to have an End in View,
Grace to adorn, and Method to perſue;
From *right*, and *fit* the curious Maſter plan'd,
And Grace, and Beauty roſe beneath his Hand;
Hence the plain *Dorique* was the Villa's Pride,
And *Rock-Work* Temples deck'd the Ocean's Side;

The

The grave *Ionick* tow'rd in King's Abodes,
And proud *Corinthian* ſhrin'd th' immortal Gods.

To *Greece* th' *Epheſian* Temple owes its Fame,
And *Grecian* Artiſts rear'd the matchleſs Frame;
So bold, ſo beauteous was the vaſt Deſign,
So grand without, ſo elegant within,
That *Greece* it ſelf the finiſh'd Wonder prais'd,
And Envy burn'd what Art divine had rais'd.

From *Greece* to *Rome* the Muſes took their Flight,
And the rough Vet'ran learn'd to be polite;
The Trump of War, by Fits forgot to roar,
And Science ſmil'd where Slaughter rag'd before;
The Quarry's Womb is ſcoop'd of all its Load
To ſtretch, from Realm to Realm, th' *eternal Road.*
The labour'd *Aquæduct* from far conveys
The borrow'd Floods, and winds thro' many a Maze;
Of emptied Urns the River Gods complain,
And *Neptune* asks their Tribute-Waves in vain;
Th' Ethereal Pow'rs, with Pleaſure, from the Skies,
Behold their own majeſtic Domes ariſe;
Th' aſpiring Capitol's diſtinguiſh'd Pile
Like *Jove*'s own Tow'rs adorns the ſacred Hill.
The ample *Circus* ſpreads its ſpacious Plain,
For War a Field! For Ships a floating Main!
The pompous *Theatre*'s amazing Bound
Incloſes Nations in its mighty Round;
Row above Row the even Ranks appear,
And Arches groan beneath the Load they bear:

The Mountain *Obelisk*'s ſtupendous Weight
An huge *Coloſſus* riſes rude and great!
The *Heroe*'s *Column* props the Heroe's Fame,
And *Roman* Triumphs hail the *Roman* Name.

THRICE happy Realms! where Genius held Command,
And ſtretch'd a regal Sceptre o'er the Land;
Where Taſte and Science only were the *Mode*,
And publick Spirit plan'd the publick Good;
Where all, with equal Zeal, aſpir'd to join
In ev'ry noble, and auguſt Deſign;
Their Country's Fame was their peculiar Pride,
The wild *Barbarians* ſhar'd in all beſide.

NOW, where is now this gen'rous Ardour fled?
Are Taſte and Science number'd with the Dead?
No more the Angel-Twins maintain their Sway,
No more the Realms their heav'nly Voice obey:
But Ignorance attends to Folly's Tale,
And Rudeneſs, Sloth, and Luxury prevail.
---- Amid ſome Moſs-grown Temple's ſad Remains,
Forlorn *Antiquity* deſerted reigns
The God of Ruins! venerably gray,
In faded Majeſty, and proud Decay:
Peace, Melancholy, Silence wait around,
And Heav'n-bred Horror guards the Holy Ground;
Like awful Statues of the Gods they ſtand,
A muſing, penſive, ſolitary Band!
Time views the Groupe with a reſpectful Eye,
Loth to deſtroy, and paſſes gently by,

Employs

Employs whole Ages to conſume his Prey,
Nor rudely drives its guardian Pow'rs away.

GENIUS of Beauty, Art's unerring Guide!
The Soul of Science! and the Muſe's Pride!
Bear my ambitious Soul thro' ev'ry Clime,
Where *Structure* groans beneath the Hand of Time!
Give me to wander round each ſacred Fane,
And learn the Graces wrought by Thee in vain!
Point me the Spot where *Wonder* ſhould behold,
In its beſt Light, what *Judgment* fram'd of old!
Penſively propt on ſome dead Heroe's Urn,
At once I ſhall admire, and praiſe, and mourn;
Explain the ſimple Sketch, the mere Deſign,
And all the Charms of Figure, Line by Line;
How Circles, Squares, and Angles beſt agree,
When tun'd to Muſick's Laws, and rang'd by Thee!
Tell where the Contraſte ſpeaks a Maſter-Hand,
That tam'd the jarring Forms to full Command,
And, from diſcordant Lines, could raiſe, at Will,
One beauteous Whole, a Monument of Skill!

Now bid the many-arched Vault aſcend,
And far the long-retreating Iſle extend!
Let the grand Portal throw the Proſpect wide,
And juſt Perſpective ſtretch from Side to Side!
'Tis thine to catch the pleas'd Spectator's Eye,
Deceive with diſtant Views, and charm with nigh;
Make the Sight ach, that down the Viſta ſtrays,
Or cheque the Glance, and thwart the broken Rays:

Bid the broad Lights from Space to Space deſcend,
And anſw'ring Shades the ſoft Gradation end.
--Thee, Goddeſs! Thee both Light, and Shade obey,
Well pleas'd to follow where thou lead'ſt the Way,
Hence Objects court the View, and hence decline,
And *Painting* copies all her Charms from thine.

CELESTIAL Eſſence! teach the proper Place
For ſculptur'd Pomp, and ornamental Grace!
Where Grandeur elegantly makes its Claim,
And Coſt but adds new Beauty to the Frame:
Where Trophies flouriſh in the nobleſt Style,
And the proud Statue crowns the Builder's Toil.
In Decoration *Fancy* claims a Part,
As more akin to Genius, than to Art;
But Fancy's tow'ring Wing, in all its Pride,
Muſt ſtoop to Thee, for Thou art *Fancy*'s Guide.
In Thee Perfection lives, and reigns alone,
And all the Graces are reduc'd to one.
--Take me, bright Goddeſs! take me to thy Arms,
Diſplay thy Sweets, and open all thy Charms!
Thee, thro' the Vaſt of Nature, I perſue,
And keep thy lov'd Idea ſtill in View;
From Matter's rudeſt Form, the rough Rock's Brow,
To the green Vale that *Flora* paints below;
From the black Storm when Winter rides the Air,
To the ſtill Calm, when Summer glads the Year;
From the rich Waſte of Autumn's fruitful Reign,
To Spring's Return, when Nature wakes again.

In Earth's dark Womb thy Footſtep I adore,
Kindling the Gem, and rip'ning Golden Oar;
To the blue Vault of Heav'n I wond'ring riſe,
And trace thy Glories thro' th' unbounded Skies:
The vegetable Birth, the firſt Eſſay
Of paſſive Life, with Rapture I ſurvey;
From Plants and Flow'rs alike thy Head appears
To *Jove*'s own Tree, that lives three hundred Years.
Thro' the Brute-World more pleas'd I wander ſtill;
The Dawn of Reaſon waits upon thy Will,
And all declares Variety of Skill:
In humane Race thy Maſter-Piece I ſee,
A Genius form'd to praiſe, and copy Thee:
Hence *Painting* Forms, and Colours firſt deſign'd,
And *Science* learn'd the Beauties of the Mind;
Hence marble Heroes gave to *Sculpture* Fame,
And *Building* rear'd the monumental Frame.
Hence *Muſick* tun'd the many-ſounding String,
And hence to thy Applauſe the *Muſes* ſing.

QUEEN of Delight! like thy own *Venus* riſe,
Day-Star of Taſte to our benighted Skies!
While great *Auguſtus* rolls the Orb of Day,
And Senſe revives beneath his genial Ray.
--If Arts are foreign to our barb'rous Coaſt,
And Trade and Arms are ſtill our only Boaſt,
If *Gothique* Piles a Pomp of Rudeneſs ſpread,
And, in that Rudeneſs, *Britain*'s Taſte is read;

Give us to copy *Boyle*'s ſuperior Skill,
And learn from him to remedy the Ill!
To know Proportion, Order, and Deſign,
And all his Graces which indeed are Thine!

F I N I S.